

Interfacing Theology, Culture, and the English Language

Edmalyn Grace Gaston-Dousel

Asian Theological Seminary & World Missions, Messiah College

Rosario I. Alonzo

University of the Philippines-Diliman

Abstract

This study sought to answer a need for materials containing theological content suitable for teaching English for Theology. Two questions were addressed in the process of interfacing theological concepts and the English language through English teaching in a seminary context: 1) How were the data from the needs analysis operationalized in the ESP (English for Special Purposes) teacher's and student's manuals? And 2) How is the effectiveness of the manuals manifested in the student outputs?

Through five stages of data gathering involving two sets of evaluation instruments, these questions were answered, a teaching/learning manual comprising a syllabus and fifteen English language lessons (English for Theological Studies: English Made Easy for Seminaries) was written, and the compatibility of the language lessons to the context and cultures represented in the seminary was established.

Key Words: English for Theology, English for Specific Purposes, English language learning materials, interfacing theological concepts and the English language.

Over the years English has been learned for utilitarian purposes as documented in the body of literature relating to English language teaching. Many purposes are even very specific in nature, in reference to certain occupational or academic requirement. When needs are clear, learning objectives can be defined in terms of these specific purposes—thus the need for English for Specific Purposes.

The Philippines, known to be the only Christian nation in Asia, have numerous churches and seminaries established all over the country. Other Asians who have found spiritual enlightenment in Christianity have seen the Philippines to be the nearest and most practical venue for theological training. Along with the aim to meet the need of a multicultural classroom comes the need to communicate effectively in a widely accepted language—English. However, although there are some seminaries offering English courses, there still exists a lack of an effective approach that will specifically meet the needs of theological students coming from varying cultural backgrounds.

In the vast array of English language learning materials, there is only a handful that contains theological content. According to Smith and Carvill (2000), the existing foreign language textbooks pose the problem of absences in the text. There is usually little or no reference to the spiritual dimension of life. Religion as a theme or topic in textbooks is seen to be controversial and is avoided. Thus, the materials available in the market do not meet the need for content that sustain the basic educational goods of theological seminaries—to train pastors, church workers, and missionaries. There is a need for materials specially designed for this purpose which will reflect values and beliefs in tune with Christian beliefs.

Not only is there a scarcity of teaching and learning materials like books and manuals in teaching English for Theology but there is also a lack of developed curricula and syllabi specially designed for teaching English to seminary students. Most seminaries in the country do not have a curriculum that meets the demands of their growing number of students in need of English proficiency training.

Culture and cultural knowledge may be non-material but they are very strong controlling forces that students bring into the English classroom. An understanding of these will enable the teacher to design a syllabus and select and produce materials that would not only meet the learners' needs but would also promote cultural awareness and respect in the class.

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) identify five stages in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program:

1. needs analysis
2. syllabus design
3. materials selection and production
4. teaching and learning
5. evaluation

Stage 1: Needs Analysis

Hutchinson and Waters (1998) identify two kinds of needs—the target needs and the learning needs. They look at target needs in terms of necessities, lacks and wants. Necessities are the “type of need determined by the target situation, that is, what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation” (Hutchinson and Waters, 1998: 55). It is also essential to know what the learner knows already. The learner’s lack is the gap between the target proficiency and the existing proficiency of the learners. Wants are those that learners view to be their needs (Hutchinson and Waters, 1998).

Richards (2001: 59) advises a “triangular approach” or collecting information from two or more sources since only one source may yield incomplete or partial data. Among his suggested procedures for collecting information, this study will use the questionnaire, self-rating (which shall be incorporated in the questionnaire) and interviews. Another needs analysis technique that was useful for this study was the authentic data collection as cited by Robinson (1991).

Stage 2: Syllabus Design

A syllabus, according to Richards (2001: 152), “describes the major elements that will be used in planning a language course and provides the basis for its instructional focus and content.” Robinson defines it as a plan of work and is thus essentially for the teacher as a guideline and context for class content. Hutchinson and Waters (1998) simply define a syllabus as a document which says what will (or at least should) be learnt.

Maminta (1987) proposes that the instructional goal should be communicative competence or the ability to use the language to perform acts of

communication. She explains that a communicative syllabus usually consists of:

- the objectives corresponding to the communicative tasks the learner is expected to perform in the target language.
- functions
- concepts or topics
- grammatical items divided into syntax and discourse makers
- vocabulary
- phonology, and
- skills for listening, reading, writing, and oral interaction.

Vella (2001: 95) offers seven steps of planning when designing a learning program specifically for adults:

1. *Who*: the learners (How many learners are there?)
2. *Why*: the situation that calls for this teaching and learning event (What do the learners need?)
3. *When*: the time frame (How much time is available?)
4. *Where*: the site for the work (What arrangement would allow learners to work together?)
5. *What*: content (What would be taught?)
6. *What for*: achievement-based objectives (What will learners do with the content in order to learn it?)
7. *How*: learning tasks (What activities can be done to facilitate learning?)

Stage 3: Materials Selection and Production

Hutchinson and Waters (1998: 108-109) give a materials design model that aims to “provide a coherent framework for the integration of the various aspects of learning, while at the same time allowing enough room for creativity and variety to flourish.” The model consists of four elements: input, content focus, language focus, task. *Input* may be a text or any piece of communication data that depend on the needs defined. In the element *content focus*, Hutchinson and Waters explain that language is not an end in itself, but a means of conveying information and feelings about something. Non-linguistic content should be exploited to generate meaningful communication in the classroom. In *language focus*, learners have the chance to take the language to pieces,

study how it works and practice putting it back together again. This means that good materials should involve both opportunities for analysis and synthesis. The ultimate purpose of language learning is language use. Materials should therefore be designed to lead towards a communicative *task* in which learners use the content and language knowledge they have built up through the unit.

Recent trends in language teaching aim at communicative competence and the principle of authenticity and real language use. Authenticity is a key concept within the communicative approach and is very relevant to ESP. Authenticity also calls for the use of authentic materials or those things (i.e., books), which are originally produced for purposes other than the teaching of language. In ESP, these are materials that are normally used in the students' own specialist workplace or study situation.

Referring to the Philippine experience, Maminta (1999:38) identifies the existence of a "cultural dilemma when authentic language and context of use are transported to the context of learning." Filipino learners are in learning situations that use authentic texts derived from and intended for an American or a native speaker audience.

Part of the development of English as an international language is what Maminta (1999:40) calls "process of indigenization or the emergence of non-native varieties" of English. She notes that

...when transplanted to a new setting the language becomes infused with its cultural environment with new forms and functions in the same manner that new dialects of English emerge....

Indeed, there is possible conflict in a learning environment for Asian cultures. Maminta (1999: 41) explains that the interactive activities encouraged in the communicative approach to language teaching might be difficult for Asian learners. Because this approach is "intended to elicit spontaneous participation and free expression," risk-taking and unpredictability are essential elements. However, many Asian learners may find this threatening. In cases where self-expression and participation might be embarrassing, learning might be inhibited. To ensure learning, adaptation is recommended:

teaching and learning of the language should not be based on predetermined approaches, but should be negotiated or

appropriated. The English language should be used to expand the learner's cultural horizons by using the language in presenting and learning various cultures. This way, the language is decolonized to become truly the language of the world (Maminta, 1999: 42).

Language must be comprehensible. This means that reading assignments of texts from the academic disciplines must be based on easy materials suitable to the linguistic level of the learners. Maminta (1987) suggested that materials for the learning component include the structured lessons which integrate oral and written language skills. Included in this category are authentic texts from which the learning items are derived. These texts are used as presentation materials in listening and reading. Other texts on the same subject matter or performing the same functions are exploited for practice activities.

Smith and Carvill (2000) note that the designing of a language course means that the worldview of the designers and the perceived needs of students and teachers come into play. They explain that the central concern is that the materials used in the classroom allow the humanity of those coming from other cultures to appear as fully as possible. Considering the need for Christian content in English instruction materials, they emphasize that "loving attention to the other in a context of mutual giving and receiving should be at the heart of a Christian approach to foreign language education. Taking the implications of our faith seriously should predispose us to listen carefully to members of other cultures, rather than projecting our own values and ideas onto them."

Stage 4: Teaching and Learning

According to Richards (2001: 209-210), it is teachers themselves who ultimately determine the success of a program. The teacher should at least possess the following core components of teacher knowledge:

- *Practical knowledge*: the teacher's repertoire of classroom techniques and strategies
- *Content knowledge*: the teacher's understanding of the subject of TESOL, e.g. pedagogical grammar, phonology, teaching theories, second language acquisition, as well as the specialized discourse and terminology of language teaching

- *Contextual knowledge*: familiarity with the school or institutional context, school norms, and knowledge of the learners, including cultural and other relevant information
- *Pedagogical knowledge*: ability to restructure content knowledge for teaching purposes, and to plan, adapt, and improvise
- *Personal knowledge*: the teacher's personal beliefs and principles and his/her individual approach to teaching
- *Reflective knowledge*: the teacher's capacity to reflect on and assess his/her own practice

Richards gives several factors that may affect how successfully a course is received by learners. The first factor is *the understanding of the course*. He says that it is important to ensure that the learners understand the goals of the course, the reason for the way it is organized and taught, and the approaches to learning they will be encouraged to take. Another factor is *the learners' views of learning*. According to Richards, learners enter a course with their own views of teaching and learning and these may not be identical to those of their teachers. The third factor is *the learners' learning styles*. Willing (1985, cited in Nunan 1988: 93 quoted in Richards, 2001: 224) found four different learner types:

- *Concrete learners*: The learners prefer learning by games, pictures, films and video, talking in pairs, learning through the use of cassettes, and going on excursions.
- *Analytical learners*: These learners like studying grammar and studying English books, studying alone, finding their own mistakes, having problems to work on, learning through reading newspapers.
- *Communicative learners*: This group likes to learn by observing and listening to native speakers, talking to friends in English, watching TV in English, using English in shops, and so on, learning English words by hearing them and by learning through conversations.
- *Authority-oriented learners*: These students like the teacher to explain everything, writing everything in a notebook, having their own textbook, learning to read, studying grammar, and learning English words by seeing them.

The fourth factor that determines how much learners receive from a course is their *motivation*. Richards (2001) explains that it is important to know what a

learner's motivation is for taking the course. Finding their motivation involves determining the reason/s why they are in the course and how it will affect their lives. The motivation also has to do with what they want from the course and which aspects of it they are most interested in.

The last factor is the *learners' support mechanisms* which include the kinds of feedback learners will get about their learning and opportunities that are provided for faster or slower learners.

Stage 5: Evaluation

Evaluation is focused on gathering information about the different aspects of the language program. Evaluation measures are used to see how the program works and how successfully it works, whether the learners' needs are met, the teacher needs further training in the program, or the goals of the program are being achieved. According to Richards (2001), evaluation may focus on the following aspects of the language program:

- *The syllabus and program content*: how relevant and engaging it was, how easy or difficult it was
- *Materials of instruction*: to provide insights about whether specific materials aided student learning
- *The teachers*: how they conducted their teaching, what their perceptions were of the program, and what they taught
- *The students*: what they learned from the program, their perceptions of it, and how they participated in it

The *formative or development-oriented evaluation* may be carried out as part of the process of program development to find out what is working well and what is not, and what problems need to be addressed. It focuses on ongoing development and improvement of the program. *Summative evaluation* (Richards, 2001) determines the effectiveness of a program, its efficiency, and the extent of its acceptability. It is the kind which most teachers and program administrators are familiar with and is carried out after a program has been implemented.

Conceptual Framework

Culture and cultural knowledge (norms, values, common understandings, classifications of reality), the relationship of language and culture, language teaching, language acquisition and learning theories, adult learner and adult learning characteristics, principles of teaching theology cross-culturally (communication, contextualization), and the five stages of English for Specific Purposes (needs analysis, syllabus design, materials selection and production, teaching and learning, and evaluation) all contribute towards the making of a basic English program for theological seminaries. They can be called factors that would affect this type of ESP materials production. Figure 1 shows how all these factors contribute towards the production of ESP materials.

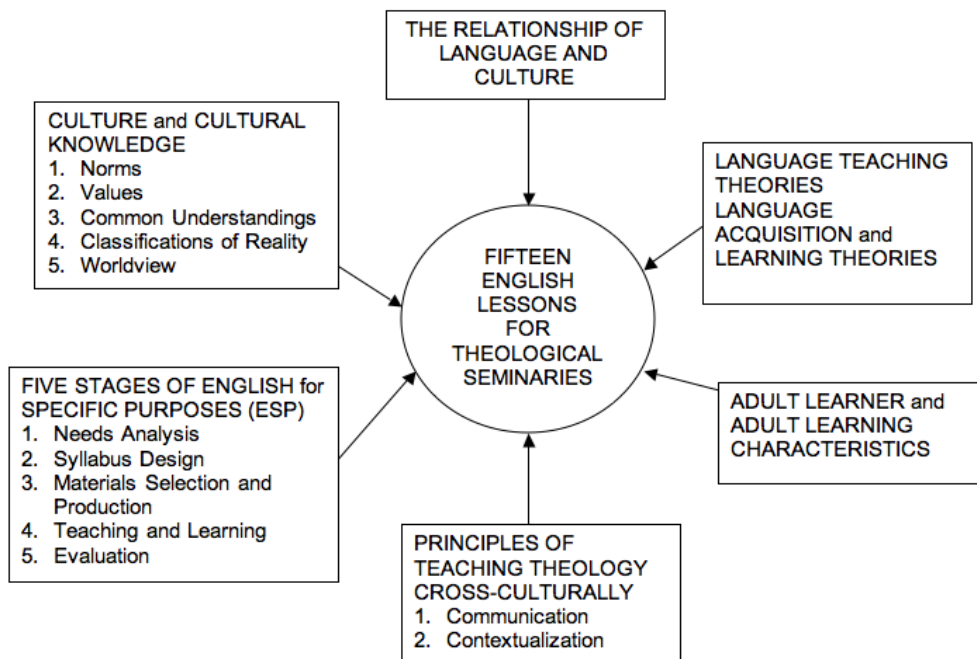


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Interfacing Theology, Culture and the English Language in 15 Language Lessons

Operational Framework

Considering that language and culture are related will help lessen frustrations in the class. This would enable both the teacher and the students to maximize the learning situation because the teacher sees how the learners' mother tongue and culture can affect the learning of a new language. This knowledge also complements the theories behind language teaching, acquisition, and learning. Understanding that there exists a dynamic relationship between language and culture can help translate theory into practice.

This is a specialized undertaking. The general subject matter, theology, is one that the English teacher and materials writer should be familiar with. Additionally, the teacher and writer must also understand how theology is taught in seminaries. A deeper and more salient question would be why theology is being taught and learned. These will give purpose, depth, and meaning to the materials to be produced. Figure 2 illustrates how Dudley-Evans and St. John's five stages of ESP with consideration to various factors could serve as the operational framework in the process of interfacing theology, culture and the English language.

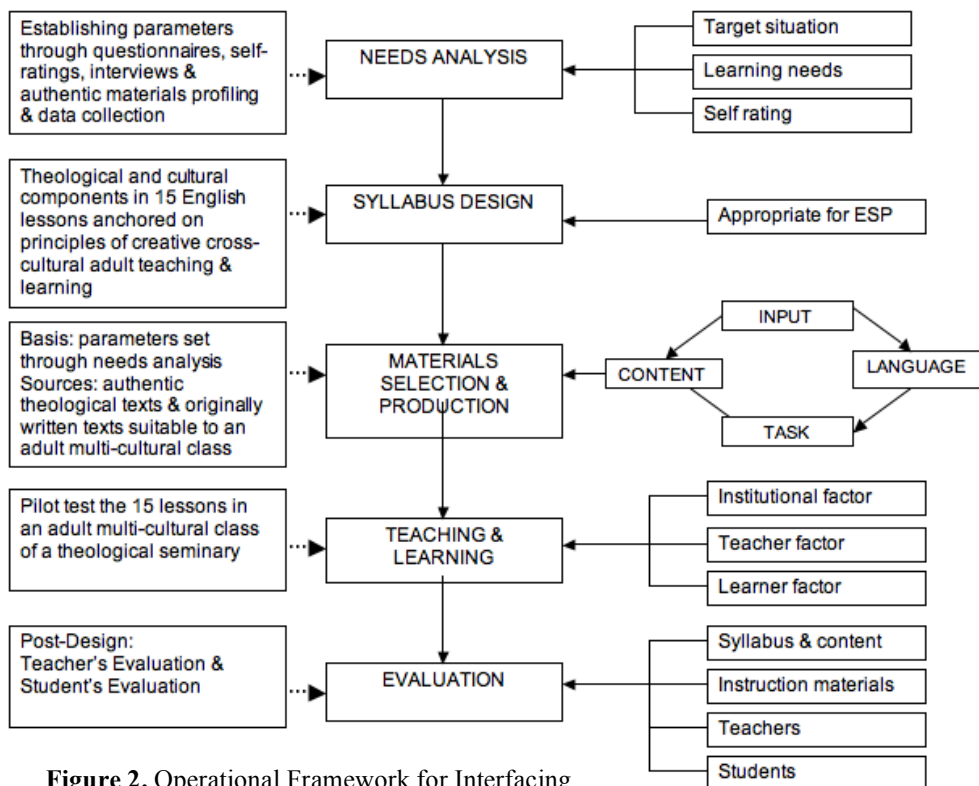


Figure 2. Operational Framework for Interfacing Theology, Culture and the English Language

Research Aims

This study focused on interfacing theological concepts and the English language through fifteen English language lessons specifically designed for Asian theological seminaries. It sought to answer the following questions:

1. How were the data from the needs analysis operationalized in the ESP teacher's and student's manuals?
2. How is the effectiveness of the manuals manifested in the student outputs?

Research Design

The study produced a tangible output—fifteen English language lessons for theological seminaries. Based on Fraenkel and Wallen's (1993) classifications of research design and methodology, this study is considered a qualitative research. It described the process of ESP materials production and actually exemplified it. The natural setting—the Asian Theological Seminary (ATS) and the International School of Theology (ISOT)—were the direct sources of data, which were collected in the form of words rather than numbers. Being concerned with the process as well as the product of ESP materials production, the study featured a narrative description of procedures and summary of results.

Sample

The study employed the purposive sampling technique.

Needs analysis respondents. The respondents of the needs analysis questionnaire were all students of Asian Theological Seminary (ATS) who scored between 450-549 in the ATS English Proficiency Exam. They were therefore enrolled in any of the following English courses: English for Theological Studies, Reading for Theological Studies, and Writing Across Disciplines. These students were from varying cultural backgrounds and nationalities. They were all seeking to enroll in one of the following programs: Diploma, Master of Divinity, or Master of Arts.

Interviewees and respondents of the authentic materials profile. Six ATS faculty members who were department heads, served as interviewees and respondents of the authentic materials profile form. They were selected based

on the following criteria: At the time of the research, the respondent should have been 1) a chairperson of a program department; 2) teaching core subjects in the ATS curriculum; and 3) teaching at ATS on a full-time basis.

The implementing class. The ISOT teacher and her class comprised of five international students served as the testing venue for the ESP material written by the researcher. The researcher had no control over the sampling nor of the time frame due to the fact that ISOT required that the school calendar be followed. This class was a heterogeneous group consisting of beginning, average, and intermediate learners.

Instrumentation, Data Gathering and Data Analysis Techniques

The instruments for gathering data used in the study were 1) needs analysis questionnaire, 2) an interview guide, 3) an authentic data profile form, 4) Richards (2001) situation analysis framework (based on data from informal interview, teacher's journal, students' outputs and video documentation); and 5) two kinds of post-design evaluation form.

The ATS English instructors administered the questionnaires. A research assistant conducted the interview with six faculty members and part of the profiling of authentic materials. The researcher collected the authentic printed materials used in the core subjects.

The Needs Analysis Questionnaire. This instrument was based on Hutchinson and Waters' (1988) framework on analyzing target situations and learner needs, the student questionnaire used at the University of Auckland (from Gravatt et al, 1997, cited in Richards, 2001), the sample pre-course information provided by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), and the guidelines used by Penaflorida and Fortez (1988) in producing materials for English for Medicine.

The question has three parts: Part I sought to find out the respondents' current use of English. Part II determined the target situational needs and the learner needs. Part III required the respondents to rate themselves in the areas of their English language skills and abilities, difficulties encountered in English, and the skills that needed improvement.

Interview Guide. This researcher-developed instrument determined the following: 1) students' difficulties in English; 2) difficulties in encountering

theological concepts; 3) reasons for the difficulties in comprehending theological concepts; and 4) help that an English course can offer to a theological seminary.

Authentic Materials Profile. This instrument was also developed by the researcher using the two conditions Robinson (1991) prescribes in collecting print materials: know who used it and know how it was used. The data was based on the core courses that the professor respondents taught.

Post-Design Evaluation Questionnaires. In this study, development-oriented and summative evaluations were used. Two evaluation questionnaires—one for the teacher and the other for the students—were utilized to evaluate the fifteen lessons that were designed in the course of this study.

Syllabus Design and Materials Selection and Production

The pointers provided in the literature (Richards, 2001; Maminta, 1987; Robinson, 1991; and Sinha and Sadorra, 1991) were put together with the principles on adult learning espoused by Vella (2001). Then based on the information about the needs of students in learning English for theological seminary training purposes, the observations and suggestions of professors, and the data on what authentic materials can be used, a syllabus for an English language course was designed.

The whole material, comprising fifteen lessons, was entitled *English for Theological Studies: English Made Easy for Seminaries*. Each of the fifteen lessons was designed for a three-hour class for adult learners anchored on Vella's (2001) four assumptions and seven steps of planning.

The syllabus was laid out in tabular form featuring the learning topics, Achievement-Based Objectives, learning tasks, grammar points, skills enhanced, evaluation tools, and additional references. Instructions for each activity or task to be undertaken in class were also provided. The tasks in every lesson were designed in a way that would allow the students to get fully involved in the activities, make them think, reflect and discover new things about themselves, their classmates, and their Christian life and ministries. A mid-course and a final check up were also included to serve as assessment tools on how well the students have grasped the lessons. An evaluation form was given at the end so the teacher can evaluate the whole class. The student's manual consisted of worksheets, handouts, and copies of the assigned reading

text for each lesson. An evaluation form was also given at the end so each student can evaluate the whole course.

Teaching and Learning (Materials Implementation)

In analyzing the results of the implementation of the materials, it was important to recognize several factors that affected the teaching and learning process. Situation analysis was used as a framework to analyze the data gathered during the implementation of the instructional materials in ISOT's English class. Richards (2001) explains this to be an analysis of factors in the context of a planned or present curriculum project that is made to assess their potential impact on the project. These factors may be political, social, economic, or institutional. Other factors include project factors, teacher factors, learner factors and adoption factors. Only the institutional, teacher, and learner factors were considered in this study.

Information and insights that helped explain the implementation part of this research was taken from various data gathering tools: 1) the teacher's journal of the class; 2) video documentation and transcription of selected sessions ; 3) samples of students' outputs; and 4) post-design evaluation results.

Post Design Evaluation

The evaluation forms were based on the self-evaluation of a teacher's lesson (from Britten and O'Dwyer, 1995, cited in Richards, 2001), and the student appraisal form used by the Department of English at City University of Hong Kong (cited in Richards, 2001). An evaluation form was designed for the teacher, and another for the students. The forms were self-administered and took place at the end of the course, when the fifteen lessons were completed.

Results and Discussion

Needs Analysis

Most of the students in seminaries in the Philippines are from other Asian countries like Myanmar, Thailand, South Korea, Vietnam and Indonesia where English is not even a second language. Some Filipinos who enrolled in English classes do so either because they don't have a good foundation in English or

because they simply want to enhance their English language skills. All the respondents signified their need for English to 1) cope with the demands of studies in a theological seminary, 2) meet the required communicative competence for daily interaction with seminary faculty, staff and students, and 3) prepare for their future ministries when they go back to their countries and contexts of origin.

All of them signified the desire to improve in the areas of listening (i.e., pronunciation/intonation/stress patterns in English, lecture note taking, general listening comprehension), speaking (i.e., giving formal speeches/presentations, participating effectively in discussions, communicating effectively with staff in or out of class, describing objects or procedures), writing (i.e., essay writing, term paper writing, sermon writing, writing references or quotations, summarizing factual information, synthesizing information from more than one source, summarizing material), and reading (i.e., analyzing written materials, knowledge of vocabulary, reading quickly, reading critically, reading for the author's viewpoint, general reading comprehension).

The faculty members' observations of student performance in their classes confirmed the above-mentioned areas for improvement. They suggested enrichment activities such as tutorials, informal gatherings and seeking outside help for editing papers to help improve students' English language skills. According to the professors, maintaining a high level of English proficiency ensures better classroom interaction and maximized learning. Furthermore, knowledge of basic grammar, a rich vocabulary and reading skills seemed to be wanting among their students, making the classroom interaction and course requirements a challenge for both teacher and students.

It was noted that difficulty in comprehending theological concepts largely hinged on the students' comprehension skills in the English language. The issue for many is inadequate English training in their education prior to coming to the seminary. Unless students come in with Bible college education or are well-trained by their churches, they would most likely have a hard time with new theological concepts like *kerygma* which means *proclamation* or *normative* and defined as *what is the universal teaching that must be obeyed*. This may come as foreign to just about anybody, native English speaker or not, unless they had the background knowledge. This would be true regardless of race or nationality. The basic problem was not in understanding theological concepts or terms per se, but in comprehending spoken and written English. Furthermore, other factors such as religious and cultural backgrounds also

contributed to the difficulties that seminary students encountered. Many Asian cultures also reflected deeply entrenched hierarchies characterized by violent problem-solving and political patronage in their home countries, which could actually complicate the Asian students' grasp of theological concepts like *theology of grace* and *public theology*.

The ATS professors were in agreement that an extra English course would be helpful for their students. Topics they suggested to be included in the program were parts of speech, figures of speech, idioms, sentence diagramming, and theological English. It was also suggested that more provisions for language practice be given (i.e., spoken and written aspects) such as more actual English conversations and writing exercises like writing life testimonies, letters, essays and stories.

Students were exposed to a variety of reading materials depending on the courses they take and under each department. These materials were used as required reading assignments, main bases for class discussion, main bases for paper writing, and as supplementary reading (readings which may not necessarily be part of the course requirements). Post-reading application points included classroom discussion, writing papers, practical application in students' current ministry with results to be reported (orally or written) in class, and personal reflection and spiritual evaluation.

Students indicated the desire for their own culture to be featured and included in the English lessons. Tradition, religion and religious practices were the elements of culture they wanted to be tackled in the lessons. Most of the respondents said that writing papers about their culture, cultural presentations, journal writing and group discussions of cultural issues should be included in their class work.

Syllabus Design and Materials Selection and Production

The data gathered during the *needs analysis* gave rise to four essential elements in putting together the ESP material *English for Theological Seminaries: English Made Easy for Seminaries*: 1) the problematic theological concepts for Asian seminary students; 2) the common language problems that Asian seminary students may encounter; 3) the language skill/s an Asian seminary student needs for his/her theological training; and 4) the help that an English program can offer to the seminary. After the four elements in teaching English for theology were determined, an ESP material was developed, i.e., a syllabus,

a teacher's and a student's manual were put together. The material was later field tested in a seminary for effectiveness.

The lessons were thematic and the themes were logically arranged to provide the students a sense of progression both in their grasp of the English language and their grasp of the cultural issues involved in studying in a foreign land. The cultural component in each lesson made it relevant to the students. Conversation exercises allowed each member of the class to share about his/her life and ministry in his/her country, practices and traditions that are unique to his/her culture, and concerns and struggles about being in a foreign country. Other activities that highlighted the cultural components included cultural presentations in class, lessons on dealing with culture shock and re-entry issues of foreigners, discussions and oral reports on the Asian varieties of English, class sharing on the status of Christianity in the students' countries where Christianity is not the religion of the majority, writing a personal faith testimony tracing how the students became a Christian, and writing reflections on the students' future plans when they return to their home countries.

The ESP material was *implemented* in another seminary to test its effectiveness. The teacher and the students were sufficiently guided by the ESP manual. As a whole, the implementation of the material was successful. The class was able to maximize their use of the ESP manuals and finished the whole fifteen lessons with some minor adjustments to fit the seminary academic calendar. However, the implementation largely depended on the following:

- the teacher's creativity, resourcefulness, class management and time management;
- the teacher's mastery of the subject matter;
- the students' cooperation and motivation to finish the course;
- the number of enrollees; and
- the English instruction structure of the seminary, i.e. English Proficiency Exam and whether or not the seminary required students to attend the English course.

The students accomplished the learning tasks required of them in each lesson, i.e., taking exams, answering grammar exercises, giving oral presentations, engaging in pair and group works, outlining, concept mapping, note taking, summarizing, skimming, scanning and paper writing. The students' outputs exhibited enhanced academic language skills. They applied various reading

strategies to various texts. This was shown through their post-reading outputs like concept maps, outlines and summaries. The students' outlines improved from mere topic outlines to full sentence outlines using the right format. They summarized a Bible passage, a theological text and a film viewed in class. They also came up with a narrative testimony of their faith as well as written reflections on various issues pertinent to the Christian life and ministry. The final examination showed a much better result than the mid-course exam. The students also exhibited significant progress in their verbal skills. Each of them gave oral presentations in class. Aside from reporting assigned topics, they managed to come up with handouts which they distributed to their classmates. The student who was comparatively slower than the others and another who struggled with his pronunciation of English words also delivered good reports, albeit with some teacher assistance. The consistent engagement in pair work and group sharing gave students many opportunities to develop oral competency thereby increasing their confidence to speak in English. The video documentation and the teacher's journal recorded how the students moved from discomfort and timidity towards confidence and courage without sacrificing accuracy in their verbal use of English. All these showed that by the end of the term, the students gained a better grasp of the English language grammar. Their outputs also revealed significant improvement in their academic and communicative language skills.

Both teacher and students acknowledged the benefits they received from going through the course using *English for Theological Studies: English Made Easy for Seminaries* because it covered a wide range of topics and lessons on form and function. However, there was a need to include more provisions for pronunciation and listening instruction, additional tasks for the benefit of slower learners in need of more practice, and more overt and direct grammar instruction from the teacher.

The *post-design evaluation* involved the teacher's and students' evaluations of the course and the ESP manual which yielded the following insights:

- While the English class in a seminary was meant primarily to equip the students to cope with the academic demands of theological studies, there seemed to be an underlying expectation from the students that an English class was purely a conversational class or a grammar class. This was largely due to the fact that the students' previous exposure to English language teaching and learning was done in a manner that did not have any connection with real life communication.

- While the students wanted more time to talk and practice their English, the teacher thought that the amount of student talk and the sharing of students' experiences, knowledge and inputs based on their lives was quite excessive. This could be due to the teacher's background as a primary school teacher in Indonesia and Mongolia where English was a foreign language. In the teaching of children, she was the sole guide and source of instruction in the classroom. Therefore, she had to adjust to teaching adults, wherein the relationship was *horizontalized* and the teacher ceased to be the only source of knowledge.
- The teacher observed that the material was trying to build up on the reading skills of the students and suggested that more reading comprehension exercises be included in the material.
- The use of authentic materials (i.e., actual texts used in various courses in the seminary) exposed the students to the level of English being used in the mainstream seminary courses.

A downside of the design of the *English for Theological Studies: English Made Easy for Seminaries*, was that it failed to offer enough opportunities for the students who did not have enough language ability to catch up with the rest of the class. This meant that the onus of creatively making up for the gap in the text was on the teacher. She should have come up with other tasks that could help remediate the problems of the slower learners. The ESP manuals seemed to be meeting the needs of the average and intermediate learners but were unable to accommodate beginners who needed basic English language instruction in conversational English, correct pronunciation, vocabulary-building and listening. Thus, there was a clear need for both the teacher and the ESP manuals to provide extra learning tasks for slower students.

Conclusion

The data from the needs analysis were operationalized in the ESP teacher's and student's manuals during the implementation phase of the research. Four elements in producing teaching and learning materials for English for Theology were identified prior to the production of the ESP material. These were 1) the problematic theological concepts for Asian seminary students; 2) the common language problems that Asian seminary students may encounter; 3) the

language skill/s an Asian seminary student needs for his/her theological training; and 4) the help that an English program can offer to the seminary. The ESP material *English for Theological Studies: English Made Easy for Seminaries* comprised a syllabus, a teacher's and a student's manual were put together and used in a seminary to teach English to foreign students.

Difficulty in comprehending theological concepts was due to the students' comprehension skills in the English language and their religious and cultural backgrounds. The common language problems encountered by an Asian student learning theology in English included difficulties in reading, writing, speaking and listening in English. This meant that the language skills that an Asian theological student needed for his/her seminary training were mostly in the academic use of the English language. All these needs were addressed through task-based lessons wherein the adult learners were able to engage in various activities that were self-directed and that utilized their background knowledge.

The class was able to maximize their use of the ESP manual and finished the whole fifteen lessons with some minor adjustments to fit the seminary academic calendar. The effectiveness of the manual was clearly manifested in the student outputs, which showed significant improvement of their academic language skills, both in the oral and written aspects. The students accomplished learning tasks like taking exams, answering grammar exercises, giving oral presentations, engaging in pair and group work, outlining, concept mapping, note taking, summarizing, skimming, scanning and paper writing.

The research established that English for Theology is indeed classifiable as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Like the other categories under ESP, English for Theology was designed for adults who have a common professional/ministry-related reason for learning English. The learners of English for Theology have a common context – the seminary – in which to use English. They also have content knowledge of their subject area since most of the students in a seminary are pastors, missionaries and church workers. And since they are adults who have gone through basic, secondary and college level education, most of them have already developed learning strategies, though not necessarily strategies in learning English.

English for Theology also faces issues pertinent to an ESP program. The issue that this study addressed was the scarcity of English language teaching materials specially designed for theological seminaries. While a few were

found by the researcher in the course of data gathering, the materials were either unpublished or custom made for certain cultures and did not encompass the Asian region as a whole. The need for an ESP material for theological seminaries is, therefore, a must. The research tackled this need by interfacing theology and culture with English.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following are recommended:

1. Include English for Theology as a field in itself and make it a part of the ESP categorization. It is recommended that English for Theology be accorded its rightful place in ESP and EAP (English for Academic Purposes) since it is a program being offered in formal graduate level setting.
2. English teachers in seminaries should seek to professionalize their field by getting continuing teacher training and specializing in ESP or EAP with their study and research focusing on English for Theology.
3. More training materials for English for Theology should be developed. These should be culturally sensitive and relevant to the multicultural classes in seminaries. Writers of such manuals or books should endeavor to create teaching materials in English for Theology that are culturally relevant, transferable, reproducible, publishable and affordable in the Asian context.
4. Seminaries should view the English courses as a vital component to the training that their students should get. Without English language proficiency, seminary students are bound to fail in their studies. Frustration level will soar and effectiveness both in their studies and in their ministry will drop. If this takes place, their purpose for getting equipped for service is defeated. It might be worth considering English for Theology as a required subject in graduate level seminaries so that students who are advised to take it don't see it merely as a remedial course or worse, a waste of their time when they would rather be studying their core courses. In line with this, it is recommended that English for Theology be made a pre-requisite subject to be required of all new students, except perhaps the native-English speakers.

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About the authors:

Edmalyn Grace Gaston-Dousel teaches Academic English at the Asian Theological Seminary and World Missions at Messiah College, Mandaluyong City.

Email: ggdousel@gmail.com

Rosario I. Alonzo is a professor in the Language Education Area of the Division of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, University of the Philippines Diliman.

Email: rialonzo@gmail.com